

LC 90

A₂ M₈

~~1904~~

Hollinger Corp.
pH 8.5

Alabama's First Question

From P. O. Box No. 347
Montgomery, Alabama
1904

IN EXCHANGE

Edgar Gardner Murphy, ed.

ALABAMA'S FIRST QUESTION: LOCAL SUPPORT FOR LOCAL SCHOOLS.

A PERSONAL LETTER.



THE following communication was addressed on February 15, 1904, to a number of the leading citizens of Alabama. The letter is self-explanatory.

MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA, Feb. 15, 1904.

Hon. and Dear Sir:

I send you herewith the printer's proofs of an article on the subject of local taxation for educational purposes. This statement has been written by Dr. J. H. Phillips, Superintendent of Schools for the City of Birmingham. It is my purpose to reprint it for general distribution among the people of Alabama, and to accompany it—in its published form—by the printed comments of a number of the leading citizens of the State. The completed pamphlet will thus form a local symposium upon the subject with which it deals.

A Collection of Opinions.

To this collection of brief opinions I earnestly invite you to contribute, making such comment upon Dr. Phillips's argument as you may think best. Contributors are requested to confine their statements within the limit of from two to six hundred words, in order that the whole pamphlet may not be excessively large.

In sending you this communication, and in taking the liberty of asking you to perform this public service, may I venture to lay before you some of the reasons why I regard this subject as of such immediate importance?

Alabama's Progress Since 1880.

No citizen of our beloved State can record without pride the history of the development of Alabama during the past twenty years. Industrially and commercially these two decades have been years of conspicuous change, of change from small things to great things, and from anxiety to confidence.

IN EXAMINATION
Ala. Dep't. of Education: A2 M 8
699
A2 A3

**What We Spend for
Education.**

Unless our educational progress is to keep pace, however, with the advancing business of the State,—who will hold the larger number of the remunerative positions which the movement of business is creating? Must these be given, in the future, to the trained men and women of other localities, while all too many of the sons and daughters of the State must be condemned to the less advantageous employments? Is there not danger that this will follow, unless we bring the training which Alabama is giving to her children a little nearer to the standard provided by other commonwealths? Alabama expends, per pupil in average attendance, only \$4.41 a year for public education. Mississippi spends \$6.48; Texas spends \$9.95; Louisiana spends \$8.82; Virginia spends \$8.91; Florida spends \$10.41; Oklahoma spends \$13.44; Maryland spends \$18.81; Kansas spends \$17.59; Nebraska spends \$23.08; Iowa spends \$24.63. I do not mention the even greater expenditures of some of the other States of the North and West. No State, apparently, in our whole country spends as little as Alabama. (See the Report of the U. S. Commissioner of Education, 1902, Vol. I, p. lxxxviii).

**A Question of Business
as well as a Question
of Education.**

Need I dwell upon the natural effect of such figures in determining the movement of *desirable* immigration? To the man who really cares about the future of his children—which State is likely to seem the more attractive—the one which offers to spend \$4.50 a year upon the child, in the average; or the State which offers to spend \$20?

**The Interest of the
Children.**

But more important and more sacred than any of the commercial or material advantages of a strong educational policy is the consideration of our children's welfare. It is not enough that our city children should be well provided for. Our larger cities and many of our larger towns have ample school accommodations. But these reach only a small fraction of the children of our State. Less than 7½ per cent. of our people live in incorporated places of 8,000 population and over. Outside of cities and towns of that size there live more than 92 per cent. of Alabama's entire population. Ours are an agricultural people. We must not, we cannot forget the country child. That in this age of exacting competitions the

young life of our commonwealth may be fitted to hold its own, that every eager and awakening mind may be wisely trained for its share in the labor and service of the world, that every human creature may enter at least a little way into that happiness which comes from knowing how to live intelligently and fruitfully, that every child of this State of ours *may have its chance*,—this is a resolution which may well become one of the commanding interests of our religion and one of the cardinal tenets of our social and political progress.

What is the Difficulty? “But,” exclaim those who know the sacrifices which our people have made for their schools, “Alabama gives more than half of her general revenues for public education.” It is true; and the fact presents a noble and inspiring record. Where, then, is the trouble? If Alabama gives so large a share, a larger portion than that given by almost any other State from the general revenues, why is it that the actual amount of her expenditure is so small, and that the expenditure of other States is sometimes from two to seven times as large? Is it because she is poor and other States are rich? That is but a small part of the difficulty. Other States, too, are poor. It is because in Alabama the schools have practically no other revenues than those supplied by general state taxation. The separate counties have not been allowed to support their schools by a tax of their own—levied by their own people for the education of their own children. In other States this latter method, the method of *local taxation*, is the chief support of public education. The vast expenditure for education in New England comes almost wholly from this source. In Massachusetts, for example, less than one dollar out of every hundred comes from the State government. More than ninety-seven dollars come directly from the people of the district or the locality affected.

Nor is this exclusively a “Northern plan.” The plan is working just as well in Mississippi, where there are more negroes, both actually and proportionately, than in Alabama. Almost half the public school funds of Mississippi come from local taxation. And Mississippi spends nearly half again as much for each child in average attendance as Alabama; and the illiteracy of the native *white* people of Mississippi is 8 per the cent., while that of Alabama is nearly 15 per cent.

The method of local taxation is also in effective use in the States of Arkansas, Georgia, South Carolina, and Louisiana. Just recently it has been introduced with great vigor in North Carolina also, and more than 185 school districts in that State have voluntarily voted an increased local tax for better schools. Their people may do this because it is permitted by the Constitution of the State. In Alabama our people have not done this, because their State Constitution has prohibited it.

**The Beginning of a
Better Method.**

In our new Constitution, however, this inhibition has been partially removed. The people of each county—provided the general tax limit has not been reached—may vote an additional tax of one mill (ten cents on each one hundred dollars worth of property) for public school purposes. This relief is wholly inadequate. No such drastic limitation has been found necessary in other Southern States. The people of Alabama have as much right to be free to educate their children as the people of South Carolina or Mississippi. And if a county in one section of the State is—for any reason—unwilling to vote a local tax, why should its unwillingness be placed as a barrier in the way of other counties, presenting different conditions and having a different disposition? I would not advocate compulsion in such a matter. It is against compulsion that I write. Is it not obvious that our counties should be free to do as they like with their own? To prohibit the people of a county from levying upon their own property—if they choose to do so—for the education of their own children, seems to me both un-democratic and un-American.

Using What We Have. Inadequate, however, as is the relief afforded by our present Constitution, our people may well be urged—wherever they may be disposed to do so—to accept it and to act under it. Something must be done. Educationally Alabama has made striking and gratifying progress. In the twenty years since 1880, she has reduced her negro illiteracy from 80.6 to 57.4 per cent., and her native white illiteracy from 25 per cent. to 14.8 per cent. Yet, while this progress should be frequently called to mind, we should be guilty of a false kindliness and a mistaken pride if we failed to face the darker side of the picture. The true service of Alabama lies not in the con-

stant flattery of our people, but in a sympathetic, yet fearless revelation of the conditions which encompass them. The course of true affection and of a wise loyalty is the course which names the disease—not in order to point the finger of reproach—but in order to find and apply the remedy. If our State is burdened with a great mass of popular ignorance, the facts concern *us*, concern our welfare and our progress, more than they concern anybody else.

The Task Before Us. Alabama has reduced her illiteracy, but in the scale of popular intelligence—as tested by the illiteracy of the native *white* population—our State stands 47th in the list! Only three other States stand lower in the scale. (See U. S. Census for 1900, Vol. II. p., ciii; and Report of U. S. Commissioner of Education, 1902, Vol. II, p. 2338.)

There are eight counties in Alabama in which 20 per cent. and over of the *white* men of voting age are illiterate. These counties are St. Clair, Winston, Franklin, Chilton, Covington, Cherokee, Cleburne, and Coffee.

There are four counties in our State in which there are (in each) more than three thousand *white* people ten years of age and over who cannot read and write. These are Jefferson, Henry, Jackson and Marshall. There are twenty-two counties in which there are (in each) over two thousand *white* people, ten years of age and over, who cannot read and write. These are Blount, Calhoun, Cherokee, Chilton, Cleburne, Coffee, Covington, Dale, Dekalb, Etowah, Franklin, Geneva, Henry, Jackson, Jefferson, Madison, Marshall, Randolph, St. Clair, Talladega, Tuscaloosa, Walker. No negroes are included in these figures. Nor are any foreigners included. I have here had reference only to the *native white* population. The exact figures for each county may be found on p. 470, table 84, of the second volume of the U. S. Census for 1900.

There was in the whole State of Alabama in 1900 a native *white* population, ten years of age and over, numbering 700,823. Of this population 103,570—or nearly one-sixth of the whole—could not read and write. That is a large number of *white* people for Alabama. It is a number greater than the number of the total *white* population (for 1900) of Birmingham, Montgomery, Mobile, Florence, Huntsville, Anniston, New Decatur, Opelika, Phoenix, Selma, Troy, Tal-

ladega, Tuscaloosa, Gadsden, Bessemer, and Eufaula. In other words the number of the native *white* illiterates of the State exceeded at the time of the last national census, the number of the aggregate white population of our sixteen largest cities. It is true that but a small proportion of the population of Alabama is in our large cities. That fact should be borne steadily in mind. And yet, after every conceivable allowance has been made, the facts—facts laid bare to the world, not by this or that individual, but by the official public records of our government—are serious enough.

Reproach Will Lie, Not in Illiteracy, but in Indifference to It. Let no one suppose that I have called attention to these things because I find it pleasant to do so, or in order to bring reproach upon our people. I do it in order to *remove* reproach; I do it in order that by facing the facts just as they are, our people may, everywhere, be roused from indifference, and helped toward the finding and the application of a remedy. What shall the remedy be? Relief must be found in better teachers, better school houses, better school supervision, better country roads, and in a closer adaptation of our public school instruction to the *practical* needs of our people.

The Question of More Money. But back of all these considerations there lies the problem of resources. With an expenditure, per pupil in average attendance, of less than five cents a day for only about one hundred days in the year, how are these elements of progress to be secured? How—therefore—may we solve the problem of resources?

There are but four possible directions in which we may look:

(1) *Larger State Appropriations.* It is obvious, however, that the Legislature can give, for the general school fund, little if any more than it gives to-day. With more than half of all the revenues going to public education, the State—as a State—has practically reached its limit.

(2) *Possible National Appropriations.* I personally believe in the wisdom and the justice of such relief. But—even if it should be secured—such a provision probably could not be obtained in time to affect the life of any living child of school age. And when secured it should come in response to local taxation, and not as a substitute for it.

(3) *Private Philanthropy*. Three great organizations—the Peabody Board, the Slater Board and the General Education Board—have represented the policy of private aid. The policy has been noble in its motive, wise in its methods, and helpful in its results. But it is wholly, conspicuously, permanently *inadequate*. The funds of these organizations are insufficient for any but exceptional and occasional cases. There exist upon the files of one of these organizations alone, enough applications from the South—from institutions and localities worthy of every confidence—to absorb within a single year the aggregate capital of all three of these Boards. Their work is indispensable. It must go on, and will go on. But it is inadequate and—in the very nature of the case—must always be so.

(4) *The Increasing Support of the Schools by Local Taxation*. It is a method almost universally adopted throughout our country; it represents the principle of self-help; it deepens interest and responsibility by more largely making the support of the schools a point of local pride; and, inasmuch as the people always closely watch the use of money they themselves directly contribute, it is a method of support which insures the largest measure of efficiency.

An Opportunity to Help. There are many other considerations which it would be well to urge, but the limitations of space forbid. Local taxation seems so seriously, so immediately important, because it is, apparently, our only “way out.”

I earnestly ask that you will kindly weigh the suggestions here made, together with the argument of Dr. Phillips, and I hope that you will consent to send me a brief comment for publication. Deeply concerned as you are in reference to the welfare of the masses of our people, I trust you will not misunderstand the spirit in which I have written. My desire is not the ambition of the officious or the intrusive. Believing that the subject should receive the serious consideration of our people, I have attempted so to present it—in conjunction with the views of a number of my fellow citizens—that it may most readily command the interest and approval of the State. Asking that you will kindly address me at P. O. Box 347, Montgomery, Alabama, and earnestly thanking you for such co-operation as you may be able to accord us, I am,

Very sincerely,

EDGAR GARDNER MURPHY.

Montgomery, Ala., February 15, 1904.

LOCAL TAXATION FOR SCHOOLS.

By DR. J. H. PHILLIPS,

Superintendent of the Public Schools of the City of Birmingham, Alabama.



UBLIC school progress and development in Alabama must await the era of local initiative and community responsibility. Neither increased State appropriations nor millions from the Federal treasury will serve as a substitute for a local school tax in awakening personal and community interest in the schools. To be economically used, school funds must be distributed in proportion to the conscious needs of the people, and those needs will be measured by the willingness of the people to help themselves by community effort. It is folly to waste school funds upon communities that do not want public schools, while others are suffering. Yet this must be the case so long as the bulk of our school moneys is obtained from the State and distributed over its entire area upon the basis of population regardless of local needs and local interest.

An Old Question Much Discussed. Local taxation for school purposes is an old question in Alabama. It has been discussed for nearly twenty years. Resolutions in favor of the measure have been passed time and again, not only by the State Educational Association, but by many of our county institutes. Since 1885, a large number of local legislative acts were passed looking to the relief of various communities that wanted to tax themselves for the education of their children. The failure of these efforts induced the friends of education to abandon legislative subterfuges, and to try amendments to the constitution. Some of these were successfully submitted, and although no apparent opposition was encountered by them, they failed to receive the majority of the whole number of votes cast for the legislative ticket. Other expedients were tried from time to time, but all proved abortive,—all succumbed to the blighting power of a State constitution which inhibited educational progress and

development by denying to the people of every community, in their organized capacity, the right—by their own taxes—to maintain a public school, the one essential of modern government, the one condition of enlightened citizenship.

Local option—not as related to the liquor question, but as applied to the question of school support—is based upon two essential facts recognized as fundamental principles in a democratic government.

The Importance of Local Self-Government. *First*—It springs from the right of local self-government, not merely in name, but in fact. That the people have an inherent right to govern themselves, is the fundamental assumption of our theory of government. This assumption involves the right of the majority to control in purely local affairs, directly, without the interposition of the representative system.

Second—Local option involves the further principle that the diversity of conditions in the various localities of the State may render a restriction that is desirable in one community, a positive injustice in another community, where the conditions are different.

The application of local option to school maintenance requires the consideration of these two principles. Local self-government is admittedly a right, inhering in the people; it is fundamental to our entire fabric of government, and antedates all constitutions. The recognized units of government are the State, the county and the district, or the city. The distribution of the functions of government should be such as to leave the smaller units untrammelled, except as to matters affecting the larger units. The theory that the State has a right to interfere in the local affairs of the county, the city and the district, because these minor divisions are the creatures of the State, is calculated to suppress spontaneous development, to check local initiative and to reduce all the communities of the State to one dead level of uniformity.

The People's Right to Tax Themselves. It is natural that the people of Alabama should have a wholesome dread of taxation. We have here a practical illustration of the adage, "The burnt child always dreads the fire." In despotic governments, taxation has been used almost invariably as an instrument of oppression and injustice. Those who were taxed were not consulted as to the purpose or the amount

of the taxes levied, and the revenues thus raised were to gratify the ambitions of the strong and to oppress and enslave the weak. Under such conditions, taxation will always be feared. However reasonable the purpose, and however small the amount, taxes levied by any but the people themselves will be regarded with suspicion. This malady which we may call "taxiphobia," is a survival of medieval despotism. For the last twenty-five years, our constitutional inhibitions and legislative prerogatives in Alabama have kept the people in an acute stage of this disease. The representative system has assumed despotic functions. The chief reason for these conditions, it is true, is found in the need of suffrage reform. With this vital question settled, the next step should be the restoration of sovereignty to the people, in the right to levy their own school taxes, for their own benefit and development. Thus only will the people of our State be relieved of this perpetual dread of taxation and distrust of their representatives.

The Only Objection to Local Taxation. The only objection that has ever been urged against the local taxation for schools is based upon the fear and distrust of the people. The masses of the people, it is said, are not only ignorant and unpatriotic, but are also non-taxpayers. They will prove too ready to vote an excessive rate of taxation, and thus jeopardize the rights of property by the heavy burdens imposed upon it. The objection is pessimistic in the extreme. It is founded upon a want of faith in the masses, and strikes at the very root of democracy. It is a remarkably strange dilemma we have in Alabama. The people are afraid of the taxing power, and the taxing power is afraid of the people. The most prosperous States are those that have no constitutional limit to their local school tax. Are the people of Alabama less intelligent, less patriotic, or less worthy of the exercise of this right than those of other States? I believe the people of Alabama may be relied upon to discharge this trust wisely and patriotically.

Method Successful in the South. In Arkansas, Mississippi, Louisiana and Georgia, whose peculiar problems are much like our own, there is a liberal limit to the local tax the people themselves may levy for schools. In some of our States it is practically the only unlimited tax. Yet there is no

record of abuse of the privilege, either in these States or in the older States, where the people have enjoyed this right for many years. I shall not discuss at length the question of tax limitation. The tendency to-day, in the majority of the States of the Union, is to limit the rate of school tax that may be levied by the legislative bodies of the several taxing units, but to provide for direct legislation by a vote of the people, where a rate beyond the prescribed maximum is desired. It is doubtless wise and necessary for the people, through the fundamental law of the State, to limit their representatives in the district, municipality, county or State, by prescribing both the minimum and maximum rates of school tax that may be levied by the legislative body of each unit, but it does not follow that the people, by the same instrument, should abrogate their sovereign right to reduce the tax below the minimum rate, or to increase it beyond the maximum limit, prescribed by their servants. A democratic government pursues a suicidal policy when it declares the people incompetent to decide for themselves what improvements they need in their local schools, and what sacrifices they are willing to make in order to secure those improvements.

Very Wide Difference in Conditions. Another important argument for local option in taxation for schools, is the diversity of conditions in different sections and communities of the State. One community receives from the State fund an amount amply sufficient to provide for such school facilities as it needs for six or eight months in the year. Another community, with radically different conditions, can scarcely maintain such a school as the people want for three months. The former community does not need local taxation, the latter does. An increase in the State appropriation that would provide for the needs of the latter, would give the former a needless surplus. The Legislature is now doing all that it should in the line of direct appropriations. Any further increase in this appropriation at this time, without local taxation, would, in my judgment, prove a serious blunder. It would involve a practical waste of a large portion of the State school fund, by placing it in communities that do not need it or will not properly use it. There are communities in Alabama that do not want public schools, and the State should never occupy the anomalous position

of forcing a public school upon a community that does not want it, while it forbids another community to tax itself to supply its own educational needs.

A Stimulus to Local Pride. Another important consideration should be kept in mind. So long as the cities, towns and districts of the State must look to the Legislature for the support of their schools, there is little incentive to local effort. Do we encounter indifference to school matters at home? Do we complain of popular apathy with regard to school topics, and the want of educational interest throughout the State? These conditions are not hard to explain. We may talk eloquently and convincingly upon school matters to our people, but there is nothing that they can do; they have no voice in the question of school maintenance. Apathy and indifference to school matters must continue so long as the State persists in trying to educate the children from the capitol, and in fighting illiteracy at long range, while the people must sit at home with shackled wills and fettered hands, powerless to help themselves. What we need is the incentive of self-help, the stimulus of local power. Education is a local problem, and that problem in Alabama will never be solved until the power is brought nearer to the problem.

If the schools of Alabama are to be appreciably improved, it must be through the power of local initiative and the spur of local responsibility.

The People Must be Interested. It is important that the Legislature shall be interested, but it is far more important that the people shall be interested. It is important that the Legislature shall be sympathetic and liberal, but it is far more important that we have sympathetic and liberal communities, with power to act up to their ideals of right, and to their conviction of their needs.

Some one has said that a presidential election every four years is a liberal university to the people of this country. The discussion of platforms and measures affords a generous education. Local campaigns in which school policies and measures are discussed, instead of mere personalities, will serve to broaden and educate the people. Let the question of a local school tax be submitted to the people; the result will be local agitation, free discussion, competition and progress. In many of the Southern States we find the

school district rapidly developing as a unit of self-government. Mr. Bryce states that the country public school in the South is destined to accomplish for local self-government what the meeting house did for New England. The school district must become the key to local self-government in the rural communities of Alabama. This is the real battle ground of true democracy.

Money is Not All That is Needed. Many people imagine that an efficient State school system is merely a question of money, no matter how the money is obtained. This is a grave mistake. Money is necessary, but it makes a great deal of difference in the interest and sympathy of the patrons of the schools, if they are individually responsible. In many communities of the State, the public schools are still referred to contemptuously as "free schools," and "charity schools," and "pauper schools." How can it be otherwise when the State forces a public school of equal duration upon all communities alike, whether they want it or not? How can it be otherwise when the people of the community contribute nothing directly to the maintenance of their school and consider their per capita school fund as a stipend graciously bestowed by a liberal Legislature? It is not money alone that our schools need, but with it they need local sympathy, local responsibility and local pride. The result of the present school fund in Alabama would be more than doubled, in my judgment, if at least one fourth of it were raised by local taxation, voted by the people themselves. School efficiency demands that maintenance and responsibility shall not be separated, but go hand in hand.

Instead of depending absolutely upon the paternal interest of the State for increased appropriations and general taxes for the maintenance of our schools, let us strike our constitutional fetters from our limbs and, like freemen, exercise the rights of freemen, in removing the burdens of illiteracy from our shoulders. This is the privilege of democracy, the duty of patriotism.

REPRESENTATIVE COMMENTS



THE preceding articles were sent during February and March of 1904 to representative citizens of Alabama in every quarter of the State. Among the many interesting and forcible replies, the following have been selected for publication. Of the answers returned, six were non-committal and two were in the negative. All the other replies were in the affirmative. These letters will prove a valuable contribution to the discussion of what is destined to become the most important public question in Alabama. The communications speak for themselves:

From the Hon. I. W. Hill, State Superintendent of Education of Alabama.

I have read with much interest your letter of Feb. 15th, and, also, the statement of Dr. J. H. Phillips on the question of local taxation for school purposes. The statistics furnished in your letter prove conclusively that something must be done in Alabama. You say truly, "Ours are an agricultural people." The boys and girls found among the 92 per cent. of the population found outside of cities containing 8,000 population, or more, have the same right to educational advantages that their cousins in the cities possess. The cities and larger towns manage by the exercise of their corporate rights to secure sufficient sums of money to maintain efficient school systems. The rural school depends entirely upon the per capita disbursement by the state and voluntary contributions from its patrons. Dr. Phillips has grasped the situation in Alabama. Local taxation is the only solution of the problem. Alabama, as a State, is doing, at this time, all that she should be asked to do. Let the counties now come forward and help themselves. Let us then provide the way by which the districts may help themselves. Many of the districts which reserved the right of local taxation for school purposes under the new Constitution, have already voted the tax. I believe many others would do the same thing had they the constitutional right.

Count me a "full scholar" on the right of local taxation for school purposes by both counties and districts.

From John W. Abercrombie, President of the University of Alabama.

I heartily endorse the article of Supt. Phillips on "Local Taxation for Schools." His arguments are clear and, to my mind, unanswerable.

Alabama is coming to realize more and more her educational duty, and is making efforts to discharge that duty.

This is a matter of gratification to those who have labored so long and so assiduously to that end. And she is striving to do this duty without regard to race or color or previous condition. A sum amounting to over a million dollars, nearly fifty per cent. of the State's revenues, is expended annually for public education. From a State standpoint, considering population and wealth, no State is doing more. Indeed the State, in a State capacity, is doing approximately all that could be expected.

Yet, the revenues are altogether inadequate. The school houses, are, in many instances, but miserable makeshifts; the annual sessions are lamentably short, ranging from ninety-three days in the colored schools to one hundred and six in the white; the teachers, as a rule, are poorly prepared and more poorly paid, the majority being without special training and holding low grade certificates, and the average of salaries ranging from twenty-three dollars per month in the colored to thirty-three dollars per month in the white schools. When compared with the necessities of the situation, it is clear that the funds are entirely inadequate.

Then what shall we do? Shall we wait until Alabama increases in wealth? If so, is she not likely to also increase in population? Shall we look to others for help, and while looking suffer our children to grow up in ignorance? No, in the absence of federal aid which now seems to be remote, there is but one hope for us, and that hope lies in giving, not only to counties, but also to townships, districts and municipalities the constitutional and statutory power of taxation for educational purposes. If the people of a community desire to levy a tax upon their property to build a school house, or to supplement the State fund, for the purpose of providing better education for their children, why should they not be permitted to do so?

The right of local self-government is a principle for which the people of Alabama have always contended. Yet, in the matter of providing education for their children, it is a right which the fundamental law of the State denies to them. This constitutional inhibition is not in accord with the Democratic idea of free government, and is a standing barrier to complete and permanent educational development.

Without the power of local taxation, no State has been able to establish and maintain an adequate public school system, and in the delegation of such power to the people lies the only means by which Alabama can meet her supremest obligation. There should be no limit, constitutional or statutory, general or local, to the power of people who own property to tax themselves for the purpose of fitting their children for intelligent and patriotic citizenship, and for success in the performance of life's everyday duties.

Universal education of the right sort would be cheap at any cost. Without local taxation it is impossible in Alabama.

From C. C. Thach, President of the Alabama Polytechnic Institute, Auburn, Alabama.

I have read with the greatest interest the lucid articles of Mr. Edgar Gardner Murphy and Dr. J. H. Phillips concerning the state of the Free Public Schools of Alabama. Their ringing, convincing words have my hearty concurrence, and I rejoice to see them waging a campaign, a crusade for the welfare of the rising generation of the children of Alabama.

To my mind, the most vital concern to the State of Alabama to-day is this same question of education, and the only "way out" of the wilderness we are in is, as stated, by "local taxation."

The limited space necessarily assigned me forbids any formal discussion, but the sad situation itself as depicted is eloquent enough to stir the heart of any man who loves his State; and how long, we ask, shall we suffer the melancholy condition to continue? Are we satisfied that Alabama shall remain practically the lowest State in all the Union in school expenditures, and practically the highest State in all the Union in illiteracy? Is this not, indeed, a condition which, however distasteful to record, should come home to the heart and bosom of every true citizen, and serve as a goad to sting him to action?

(1) The State as a political organization needs a better Common School system. In any form of government the masses are the rulers, and water cannot rise above its level. To any community, be it country neighborhood, village, city, or county, a mass of inert brutish citizenship is absolutely fatal to all that makes for higher civilization, refinement, culture, and the peace and dignity of life.

(2) Our higher educational institutions, colleges and universities, are in the greatest need of better common schools. The colleges take as grist what is turned over to them by the schools below, and to-day every educator in the higher institutions of learning in Alabama is painfully aware of the most imperfect preparatory training of a large per cent. of the students who apply to enter college.

(3) The commercial, industrial, if you please materialistic interests of Alabama need better schools throughout the length and breadth of the State.

No community can afford to neglect the methods whereby wealth and prosperity have been produced by other communities. The highest daily wages are paid where the most is paid for education. Inventiveness, mental alertness, the spirit of progress, thrift, the capacity to do something, to build cozy homes, savings banks,—these are all direct products of good schools.

The universal verdict in regard to the decline of England as an industrial country is that the fundamental defect lies in the lack of elementary popular education. On the other hand, the phenomenal industrial prosperity of America is

regarded by innumerable committees of investigation from abroad as directly attributable to our superb American system of free common schools.

And if common schools are indispensable for producing wealth in Iowa or Indiana, are they not equally indispensable in Alabama? There can be but one reply.

Truly the children of a State are its best assets, and money converted into brain power is the wisest and most profitable investment possible for a community to make. Of what avail, pray, are the boasted splendid material endowments of Alabama in field, mine, and river, if we have not the brain power, the science and the skill to convert them from the crude conditions that prevailed under the reign of the Indian? Nor should we be content to import this brain power from other States.

Now, there can be no successful system of schools for the people without money. The mill will not grind without water. And no State Treasury can possibly meet the demands of the situation. Alabama as a State has done all that she can and all that she should do for common schools. A grave defect of the new Constitution is its failure to grant a larger right of local taxation for schools. Without representation taxation is tyranny; but a representative government that is parsimonious, is an ignorant, unprogressive government, destined to stagnation and rot.

A propaganda of agitation should be conducted until this unwise prohibition is removed. Private ownership turns sand into gold, and local ownership in schools is indispensable for keen personal interest in their welfare, and the greatest benefit to the community.

I am confident that the people if properly approached can be brought to see the paramount importance of better common schools; can be brought to see the pressing, insistent necessity of better common schools; better teachers, rather than many who seek the profession of teaching as a haven of refuge; better school buildings, affording both better comfort and health and a touch of inspiration to the stunted aesthetic nature of our children; better pay; better school furniture; longer terms. These are a few of the long catalogue of our needs in education, unless we in Alabama are content to remain in the rear guard of education and progress.

A tremendous evangelistic campaign for this religion of education should be waged in every hamlet in our State.

From Ex-Gov. W. C. Oates, Montgomery, Alabama. I have carefully read your very able address upon the subject of "Local Support for Local Schools." Your presentation of the needs and suggestion of the ways and means to remedy the great evil of illiteracy is clear, cogent and convincing and meets my hearty approval. In Alabama the people have been led to believe that it is unnecessary for

the parent to do anything towards the education of his child—that the State will attend to that. Demagogic politicians have largely contributed to this state of public opinion. It is paternalism gone to seed. The people should learn the philosophy of Franklin—"That God helps those who help themselves;" that the State will help those who help themselves.

Local taxation is the only light I see at present for increased educational advantages. The first paragraph in the article by Dr. J. H. Phillips on "Local Taxation for Schools" so fully expresses my views that I adopt it entire without qualification. Go on with your good work, Mr. Murphy. Your learning and great ability could not be employed in any other field to greater advantage to the public.

**From Thomas G. Jones,
U. S. District Judge
for the Northern and
Middle Districts of
Alabama; Ex-Governor
of Alabama.**

I have carefully read Dr. Phillips's article on local taxation for educational purposes. In the main, I heartily concur in his views, and think the granting of such power is demanded by many cogent reasons. I shall, however, mention only one consideration which, it seems to me, has not been given the prominence which it deserves, in weighing the advantages of local taxation.

The real value of our institutions depends more upon the character of individual communities, than upon the aggregate worth of the people of the State as a whole. Under our system, each community in practice, whatever it may be in theory, is a sovereign for many purposes. If we could dismiss, as we can not, all thought of duty to the youth, the State, especially under present conditions, should confer such power on the plainest principles of political self-preservation. The value of Constitutional safeguards for the protection of life, liberty and property, and the pursuit of happiness, are worth in any community, only the value which the intelligence and civic virtues of the people place upon them. If the local constituency, which select the judges and juries, to whom these rights are committed, is ignorant or corrupt, the prejudices, or selfishness, or ignorance of that community will set aside the law, or will enforce it only as an instrument of its own narrowness or prejudice. The State, having left the law in their keeping, thus enthrones local tyranny; since it can not interfere, without peaceable or violent revolution, against its own law. The cure for such evil in local government, presents a grave problem for statesmanship. Surely, its wisest solution lies in curing the evil where it starts, by improving and strengthening the local constituency, rather than by promoting centralization, and bringing force to bear from the outside. Men who do not stop to reflect, seldom realize how absolutely their most sacred rights of life, liberty and property are held at the mercy of the

localities in which they reside, and that they will be measurably recognized and protected, or trampled down, just in proportion as the majority in that community is intelligent and conscientious, or ignorant and low, in its standard of civic duty.

The extent to which a majority may vote local taxation, should, of course, be carefully limited. One prime reason is, that without such limitations the people will not confer it, lest the evils it may entail, whether real or fancied, will outweigh the good which may be accomplished. To get the power at all, its advocates must make at least this much concession. For instance, the people of a city, town or community, who pay their share of taxation for general educational purposes, and in addition put extra taxation on themselves to educate the children within their borders, should not be compelled to submit to extra local taxation to help outside schools in the county, because a majority in the county may be so minded.

From the Hon. George W. Taylor, Member of Congress from the First Alabama District.

I have read with much pleasure and more profit the article by Dr. J. H. Phillips on "Local Taxation for Schools." It is a budget of words fitly spoken, on the right subject, at the right time, and in the right place. Self-help for self-improvement of the people, by the people, is the subject; the all-important present, the only time which we can claim as our own, now, is the time; and the place is Alabama—at hand.

The suggestion, in its last analysis, is simply how to secure co-operation in each community in the great problem of the 20th century, a higher education common to all the people. The two great needs for the result are mutual willingness and ability to help each other, supplemented and perhaps controlled by mutual sympathy in the end to be attained.

"Man cannot live by bread alone," neither can the school; nor can education live and grow by money alone.

The State has done all that it can do, possibly all that it ought to do. It divides its income into two parts and one is devoted to education.

The people must do something for themselves, each community must do something for itself, and each individual must do something for himself or herself—and then all must help each other.

Education is backward in Alabama. No one who will inform himself can deny it. But it is not the fault of the State, it is not the fault of Alabama.

There is a need for more money. Alabama cannot provide it, she has done her part. Who is to furnish it, and how? Each community must take up the question and decide for itself, and above all provide for itself. The first, last and only

answer is systematic contribution, and general co-operation, which means voluntary assessments by local taxation.

The problem of education is a broad one, it is general, it is universal, but practically it must be worked out locally, it can only be worked out by each community, acting for itself and within itself.

The State can furnish, does furnish, will furnish only a portion of the necessary money. It can do no more. Each community must do the rest. Mutual contribution and co-operation must begin at home. It is the common lot, a law of life and "God helps only those who help themselves."

I heartily approve "local taxation for local schools."

From the Hon. A. A. Wiley, Member of Congress from the Second Alabama District.

I am in receipt of your letter of recent date, asking me to send you a brief comment upon Dr. Phillips's article, entitled "Local Taxation for Schools;" and in reply, I beg to say that I am an enthusiastic advocate of the education of the boys and girls of Alabama, and, therefore favor any "ways and means" which will make the public school system more progressive and efficient.

There is nothing which renders the body of so much esteem in the eye of the great Being who formed it, as the fact that there is included within it an immortal spirit, whose flames can never be quenched but by an Almighty act. The mind is God's master-piece—His crowning work. Mental improvement, therefore, stands in the front rank of every other interest. It is the philosopher's stone that converts the base metal into pure gold. The prejudices which debase, the superstitions which enslave, vanish before an educated mind. Knowledge, when disciplined and directed in patriotic channels, curbs the tyrant's power and stays the despot's arm. Nobility is nothing without it, while liberty finds her best bulwark in its protection. Education, then, being of the highest governmental necessity, I am impressed favorably with the plan suggested by Dr. Phillips as being the most efficacious method, not only to improve our public school system, but also to lift the load of ignorance from the shoulders of the State, and to remove the appalling cloud of illiteracy which hangs over us.

Carlyle somewhere has said: "Government is man's highest work well done." Property in Alabama has greatly increased in value within the past few years. Mines are being opened and furnaces kindled everywhere. Our State is rapidly developing her many wonderful resources. This encourages us to take no foreboding view of the future; and so also it behooves us to bid God-speed to any movement looking to better educational facilities for the youthful generation, in whose hands will be lodged the destiny, the weal or woe, of our glorious Commonwealth.

By the Hon. Sydney J. Bowie, Member of Congress from the Fourth Alabama District.

I favor local taxation in addition to the State fund, for the benefit of our public schools, for two reasons, first, in this way only can the proper local pride and interest, which is essential to the best results, be aroused, and secondly the State fund, which has reached its maximum, is notoriously inadequate. The right of a community to tax itself for public purposes, it seems to me, is indisputable, and the denial of that right is contrary to the spirit and genius of our institutions.

Thomas Jefferson, the founder of Democracy and in many particulars the greatest statesman this country ever produced, said: "Preach a crusade against ignorance! Establish and improve the law for educating the common people! Let our countrymen know that the people alone can protect us from the evils of misgovernment." And in discussing his famous bill for the education of the people of Virginia he said:

"The expense of the elementary schools for every county is proposed to be levied on the wealth of the county and all the children, rich and poor, to be educated at these three years free.

"The truth is, that the want of good education with us is not from our poverty but from the want of a system. More money is now paid for the education of a part (referring to their private school systems) than would be paid for the whole if systematically arranged.

"What will be the retribution of the wealthy individual (for his support of general education)? First, the peopling of his neighborhood with honest, useful, enlightened citizens, understanding their own rights and firm in their perpetuation. Second, when his own descendants become poor, which they generally do within three generations (no law of primogeniture now perpetuating wealth in the same families) their children will be educated by the then rich, and the little advance he now makes to poverty himself while rich, will be repaid by the then rich to his descendants when they become poor, and thus give them a chance to rise again. This is a solid consideration and should go home to the bosom of every parent. It will be seed sown in fertile ground. It is a provision for his family looking to distant times and far in duration beyond what he now has in hand for them."

Mr. Jefferson was one of those statesmen who saw far in advance of the people of his own day. His plan involved first, primary schools in every neighborhood for every child free of all tuition for three years, not for three months each, but of nine months each; second, a high school in every county, and third, a university in each state, showing that while he believed in free primary education for everybody, he also believed that the opportunity for higher education for those who wanted it should be placed within their reach.

The State of Alabama now contributes about one-half of its total revenue to the public schools of our State. This is

all the State can do at present and probably all it will ever be able to do, because the necessary expenses of the government are keeping pace with the revenues. What are the counties doing? Absolutely nothing. Not a county in Alabama pays a penny for this purpose. The towns are doing something, but fully ninety per cent. of our population is rural and town schools cannot reach them. We have therefore practically nine-tenths of our school children without a particle of help in the matter of education, except from the State treasury.

Can we succeed in removing the blight of illiteracy from our children on that system? The best answer to that question is the extent of illiteracy itself among the white population in the State of Alabama, which is to-day practically the same as it was fifty years ago. That the present sum raised for public school purposes is entirely inadequate is established by evidence without dispute. That it cannot be increased by State aid is equally true.

Indeed the natural increase in our children of school age is greater than the increase in the school fund, to the extent that, whereas, the State raised a sum last year sufficient to allow \$1.37 for every child of school age, the alarming fact is disclosed this year that this small and inadequate amount was actually reduced to \$1.31, so that we are really traveling backwards. What then are we to do? Are we to sit idly by and see one-sixth of our white population uneducated and one-third more so imperfectly educated as to be of very slight benefit to them, or shall we face the issue like men and settle it? It seems to me that the issue ought to be met and solved. We must do away with the idea that we are too poor to educate our own children. If there is anything that can be said on the subject it is to repeat the words of Dr. Curry, "Not too poor to educate them, but too poor not to educate them."

I do not claim that the illiterate white man is any worse than the educated white man. I do not think it is a question of morals at all. However, generally speaking, being able to read, especially the word of God, would seem to conduce to better morals; but the point does not lie there. The fact is, that an uneducated man, however honorable, however industrious, or patriotic, has the door of opportunity shut forever in his face. What public preferment can come to the man who can neither read or write? What real opportunity can come to him in business? Absolutely none. Of course, with great energy along with courage he may triumph in part over his condition and accumulate a small stock of this world's goods, but how small it must be in comparison with what he could accomplish with the same amount of energy and courage if he had an education. And just here is also the case of those who have but a smattering of education. They are better off, of course, than those who have none at all, but how slight are their advantages! Is it true patriotism to leave them and

their children in this practically hopeless condition? Is it for the welfare of our State or is it for the welfare of even the prosperous people in our State? If we place it upon the lowest basis, the money side of it alone, is it not our duty and to our interest to provide adequate means for at least the primary education of all our people in the State? The only way this has been or ever can be done is through local effort and the only way that local effort has ever been obtained is through local taxation.

Alabama enjoys the distinction of being the only State in the Union which denies to the people the right, under their minor civil divisions, to tax themselves for the education of their own children. The rural population of the State of Iowa is nearly the same as the rural population of Alabama. In Iowa they have, and have had for many years, a splendid school system based upon local taxation. Alabama's expenditure per pupil in average attendance is only \$4.41 per year for education, while Iowa expends for the same purpose \$24.63 per pupil per year. Both States are principally farming States. The manufacturing industries are nearly the same in both states with the advantage slightly in favor of Iowa because of its larger cities. Now note the difference. While the number of people, chiefly farmers in both States is practically the same, the total value of farms in Alabama in 1900, as shown by the census, was \$179,399,882, and in Iowa, \$1,834,345,546, or more than one thousand per cent. of value in excess of Alabama. In net yield per farm per annum, Alabama is below every State in the Union except North Carolina, and enjoys the unenviable distinction of having a larger per centage of white illiteracy than any State in the Union with the exception of Louisiana and North Carolina. The native *white illiteracy* of Alabama is 14.8 per cent.; of Iowa is 1.2 per cent.

I do not bring out these figures to reflect upon Alabama at all, because I am intensely loyal to the State. I believe it has the finest climate, the finest variety of soil and has as good citizenship as any in the Union, but I know of no way of reaching this question except by stating the facts about it. If self-praise is a weakness, self-deception is a crime!

Let us continue the comparison between Iowa and Alabama a little further. Alabama's large number of negroes may account for some of the difference, but by no means for all of it. The amount of wheat produced in Iowa per acre in 1902, as shown by official records, was 12 7-10 bushels; in Alabama, 6 bushels. The amount of corn in Iowa per acre, 32 bushels; in Alabama, 8 4-10 bushels; the amount of oats per acre in Iowa, 30 7-10 bushels; in Alabama, 10 9-10 bushels. Alabama was the smallest State in the Union in 1900 in the production of wheat and oats per acre, the forty-seventh in corn, and the lowest in the yield of cotton per acre except Oklahoma and Florida which are not properly classed as cotton States at all.

Will our people submit to these conditions or will they take hold of it and conquer it? We have the best variety of land, as splendid a citizenship, and as good a climate as there is in the world. Then where is the trouble? Between eighty and ninety per cent of our people live on the farms and they have no schools except such as are provided by the State. These schools are notoriously inadequate. What then is the remedy? I know of but one answer which other States have made to this question, and that is, to let the people of each community settle the question of the education of their own people in their own way. If we may not guide our feet by the lamp of experience, by what light shall they be guided?

I do not think the present system of school maintenance in Alabama is logical or can ever be made effective. It takes no account of the difference of conditions in localities.

For example, in the great County of Dallas there were only 266 illiterate whites over ten years of age when the last census was taken, in Greene, only 123; in Lowndes, 209; in Mason 160. In Montgomery, the Capital county of the State, only 478; Sumter 172; Wilcox 307; Bullock 358. Now, contrast these figures with Blount 2,657; Calhoun 2,747; Cherokee 2,499; Coffee, 2,982; Marshall 3,055; Henry 3,266; Jackson 3,715; Jefferson 4,532. The difficulty of the situation is, we provide the same law, the same revenues and same conditions for the first eight counties that we do for the last eight. Is it reasonable?

It seems to me it is just as unreasonable as the tyrant Procrustes, who demanded that all of the men in his army should be exactly six feet tall. When told that it would be impossible to comply with his request and get any considerable number of men, he said "Not so, just lay the men down upon a bed six feet in length, and those who are less than six feet tall can be stretched to the limit and those who are more than six feet can be cut off to that extent." In that way he secured the blessings of uniformity!

I would not impose a local tax upon any community that did not want it or did not need it, but those that do want it and do need it should not be compelled to wait upon others who do not. I believe in a limit upon taxation, but I do think, considering the necessity and importance of education, without which, as Mr. Jefferson said, a republic cannot live, the people should have the right to tax themselves something! I do not contend that it should be left to them to levy an unreasonable amount, but I do say that, under proper restrictions, they ought to have a right to levy some amount. Why not? It seems to me the denial of this right is a denial of the principle of home rule, upon which not democracy alone, but our very institutions depend. There may be some facts which we do not care to talk to the world about, but only the foolish ostrich hides its head in the sand. Is it the part of wisdom to shut our eyes to conditions staring us in the face? I do not believe the State

as such can, or ought to, do more than it has for our public schools, but when a community in our State having the will, and necessity, wants to relieve itself of the burden of illiteracy by placing a reasonable tax upon its own property, I think the denial of that privilege is a blow at self-government and an unquestionable injury to our people.

**From the late Hon.
Chas. W. Thompson,
Member of Congress
from the Fifth Ala-
bama District.**

Replying to yours of the 15th inst., I heartily endorse the valuable suggestions made by Dr. J. H. Phillips on Local Taxation for Schools, which, I believe, will do more to stimulate our people along educational lines than larger appropriations by the State. This question, however, should be left to each community to determine for itself the amount of tax to be levied and the manner in which it shall be applied. The people in Alabama who need education most are those who, unfortunately, care the least for it. If a tax were levied upon them for the support and maintenance of our public schools, it would at once enlist their earnest consideration, and would soon have their cordial support and patronage.

It would also guarantee better teachers, and a more efficient and thorough training of our children.

**From Mr. T. G. Bush,
President of the Mo-
bile and Birmingham
Railroad Company,
etc., Birmingham, Ala-
bama.**

I agree entirely with you and Prof. Phillips as to the State of Alabama contributing as much as possible from its general fund to school purposes, and that any further provision for this cause can only be made through local assessment, as authorized by the new constitution. I believe that this ought to be done where there is a demand for better school facilities, and I am quite sure that your letter will serve a good purpose to this end. I think it entirely proper that the attention of the people should be called to this important subject. I wish you success in your efforts.

**From M. C. Wilson, Pres-
ident of the State Nor-
mal College, Florence,
Alabama.**

The arguments set forth by Dr. Phillips, for local option applied to public education, are conclusive. The support of the public schools wholly by legislative appropriation is not only wasteful, uncertain, and inefficient, but it is even baneful, in that it helps to deprive the people of their liberties, by making them dependent upon the bounty of the State for the education which should be free as the air to all who want it.

There is no corporation on the face of the earth that would expend a million of dollars a year in such an unbusiness-like way as that in which, every year, the State of Ala-

bama expends a million of dollars on education. Too often the people feel a deadly apathy toward the school deriving its support, its system, and its inspiration from Montgomery. The children do not attend, and are not made to attend this school regularly. Any teacher in a rural school can attest the fact that there is a great difference between the total enrollment and the average attendance in school. The annual report of the State Superintendent shows that a large percentage of the children do not even enroll. Can any one doubt that this indifference to education would be dispelled if the citizens in each community paid the tax to support the public school? Is it possible to doubt that public opinion would compel attendance at school if the community provided for its support? We may see in hundreds of communities, the wasteful extravagance of paying a teacher to keep school with an average attendance of ten or twelve pupils in a district having a school population of fifty or sixty!

When the truth of a proposition has been demonstrated in forty different States in every section of the Union, and demonstrated continuously for fifty years in some of them, it is folly to say that this proposition would not prove true in Alabama. If local taxation for school purposes has proved the best possible means of promoting education in almost every State, then it must be the best possible means of building up the public schools of Alabama.

Real growth has never come, and can never come to individual, community, or state, by living under the patronage of some stronger influence. If the youth is to make a strong, useful, independent citizen, he must be thrown upon his own resources, and learn to think and act for himself. Failures and mistakes he probably will make, but these will only serve to strengthen his fibres for a firmer grip in future struggles. If a community is to learn to exercise its higher possible function, self-government, it must be permitted to act for itself in all matters that concern only itself. As long as our schools are completely tied to the State's apron-strings, they will remain weak and inefficient.

In my judgment, almost as great benefits from the inauguration of a system of local taxation, would accrue to the parents, the mature citizens, as to the children. It would transform these citizens from apathetic, half-hearted, selfish beings into alert, enthusiastic, patriotic men and women, who finding scope for the employment of their individual powers, would begin to work under the best possible conditions for growth. Not only would good schools, locally supported, train the children to become good citizens, but they would make better citizens of those who, beyond the school age, must make the exertion to support them. The present generation of taxpayers in blessing the coming generation with good schools, would itself be blessed with a larger growth, a higher mind.

**From C. W. Dugette,
President of the State
Normal School, Jack-
sonville, Alabama.**

Please allow me to endorse fully the sentiments contained in your paper and in that of Dr. Phillips, and to subscribe to the correctness of the

facts presented and the conclusions drawn.

In a school, the most prominent factor around which all work centers, is the pupil. The other essential one is the teacher. There are minor ones which affect the school, to wit: the parent, the school-house and grounds, the pay of the teacher, and the community.

If our schools are not what they should be we must look to these factors to find the trouble.

What are the objections to be urged against the public schools of Alabama now? They are, 1. Too short terms; 2. Inefficient teachers; 3. Lack of interest on the part of parents and communities.

The terms are five months, when they should be nine. Why? Nothing to pay teachers for a longer term.

While the great progress in a professional way has been made by the teachers of Alabama in recent years, the proportion of those who have studied especially for their work, to those who have not done so, is still deplorably small, and as a rule the best men and women of our State, the best intellects, those who can become moving forces for good, do not enter the schools as teachers. Why do these two conditions exist? Because the average salaries of teachers in Alabama is about \$300 per year. Here is no inducement to people to enter the work of teaching, so if one does so, it is from philanthropic motives, or it is because he finds it more convenient than anything else, and as he does not expect to follow it permanently, he does not prepare for it. He feels that he cannot afford to spend money to prepare to do a work that will pay him only \$300 per year.

Considering lack of interest on the part of parents and communities, we find that not one man in a hundred has been in a school-house for any purpose since he himself was a school boy. The mothers are not so interested as should be expected. Those of the community who have no children to send to school are not even bound by that tie.

While the percentage of illiteracy in the State is about forty, only about fifty per cent. of the school population are enrolled in the public schools, and a good proportion of them lose a considerable part of the five months' term, as is shown by the average attendance of only about thirty-three per cent. Why this lack of interest on the part of parents and communities in the public school, the most important activity of the State?

Ah, here we find the answer, activity of the State and not of the community and of the individual. The whole thing is too remote. As long as the State is running it, it must be all right. If the State says five months is enough,

that must be enough, let the State attend to that! How can we change this? Make the people pay for what they get. "Yes," you say, "but they pay it now." Indeed they do pay it now, but when one pays his taxes he loses sight of his money and leaves the entire management and disbursement of it with the State; but if he is told to keep his school tax and use it himself for the best interest of his children and the community, his interest is secured and retained. If he pays for a teacher, he wants the best; if he pays for the school, his children must attend. His attention is drawn to the school-house; if the house he lives in is a good one, he wants the school-house the same. If his interest is aroused this far, he will realize the advantages of a nine months' school over a five months' one, and insist on having it.

If we can find one thing that will accomplish so much for our schools, that will serve to correct all the known weaknesses in the system, shall we not have it? Local taxation will give us longer terms, more efficient teachers, more interest on the part of parents and communities, better school-houses, better average attendance, and greater progress.

I thank you for the great work you are doing for education in the South, especially in Alabama.

**From E. M. Shackelford,
President of the State
Normal College, Troy,
Alabama.**

The article by Dr. Phillips gives the gist of the subject of local taxation for school purposes, and therefore, needs but little supplementing.

The principle of local self-government has been a cardinal doctrine of the Anglo-Saxon race since it inhabited the forests of Germany. In his article Dr. Phillips intimates why this principle, as far as it relates to the subject of taxation, was surrendered in the South, and argues ably for its restoration, now that the conditions which made the surrender advisable have passed, probably never to return. It may be laid down as an axiom of democratic government that higher units should never interfere with lower units except to promote their development. They should never interfere so as to hinder their growth; and this is what the State does when it obstructs local taxation for school purposes. In asking for local taxation the people simply ask the right to do what they please with their own property. And who should object so long as they do not use it to harm others but to promote the welfare of all?

Dr. Phillips's expression, "local initiative and community responsibility," gives the key-note to the entire argument for local taxation. The further from home the less the personal interest felt. "What is everybody's business, is nobody's business," and this applies strictly to the management of school affairs. Local taxation gives personal interest. It is

a peculiarity of human nature that one values most what costs him most. Evidently, then, we are not paying enough for our education. It is admitted that the State is doing all that could reasonably be expected of it, and that it should do all that it is doing. What, then, is left for us to do? At present we must avail ourselves of the constitutional privilege of levying the one mill by counties and so agitate the right of local levies that the next Legislature will authorize a vote upon an amendment giving that power.

Suppose our education does cost us a great deal. Would it not be better to spend more money that way and benefit *all* the people than to spend so much upon the punishment of the *few*, whom ignorance leads to the violation of law? Of course, crime will be committed as long as sin remains in the human heart; but history abundantly proves that education reduces crime to the minimum.

Taxation does not frighten people when the power to make the levy is in their own hands, and they are nearly always willing to vote the levy when convinced that the amount raised will be wisely used. Let the people know that money spent in the education of their children is a profitable investment from a financial as well as a moral point of view, that the productive power of the citizen is in proportion to the amount spent on his education, and they will make the outlay. I have great faith in the people of Alabama, and I believe that when they are brought face to face with these facts, they will cheerfully vote not only for the mill tax already authorized, but also for a constitutional amendment allowing a liberal local tax for school purposes. This latter power is all the more essential now that the State is to be redistricted with regard to centres of population and natural barriers.

From Dr. A. P. Montague, President of Howard College, East Lake, Alabama.

Mr. Murphy's article upon the Public Schools of Alabama, should receive the attention and evoke the interest of every thinking citizen of our State.

Amid agricultural development and the success that has attended the working of coal and iron mines, there is a strong tendency to slight, if not to ignore, the education of the young. With the struggle to reach pecuniary independence, to make money, in short, there comes indifference to the mental and moral training of our children, unless the necessity of education as the force that must in all higher civilization direct and elevate material progress is kept constantly before the people. Your plan of local taxation is, in my judgment, the method which must work out this problem. Community interest and local pride—of the proper kind—will accomplish more than we could hope to gain from State aid, although I believe that this should be larger than the sums now given.

Before we can put into activity a general plan of local taxation, it might be well by private work and through committees to obtain assistance from all who can spare something for education.

Your efforts in behalf of the young of Alabama merit the gratitude of our entire people.

From Major W. W. Screws, Editor in Chief of the Advertiser, Montgomery, Alabama.

Every good citizen must feel an interest in the increase of educational facilities. In most of the cities and towns of 2500 population and over in Alabama, provision is made for school terms lasting eight to ten months. In these places good, and, in most cases, comfortable, school-houses have been erected, which in themselves are equivalent to a measurable extension of school time, because of the better work that can be done by teacher and pupil.

These conditions are due solely to the voluntary tax borne by the citizens, which amounts in most cases to more than the sum derived from the State. Our State Constitution, with well defined regulations and restrictions, permits local taxation for school purposes, and it is the only means of securing for the country districts the school advantages which large communities tax themselves for. With a State tax limit of only 6 1-2 mills, and very nearly half of that dedicated to school purposes, no more can be expected from that source for many years to come. Local taxation is feasible, and those most deeply interested ought to take patriotic pride in voting for it.

Dr. Phillips is to be greatly commended for his splendid article. It ought to be placed in the hands of all our people.

From Erwin Craighead, Editor of the Register, Mobile, Alabama.

I have been absent from home and just now got down to your letter and request of February 15th.

Your brief and Mr. Phillips's argument offer convincing argument in favor of local taxation for support of public education. Owing to the general and constant criticism of legislatures because of the size of the sum of legislative appropriations, we can never expect the State, even when it has ample funds, to do its full duty in support of public education. The educational fund must be supplemented by local contributions in shape of local taxes assessed and paid exclusively for school purposes.

It is my opinion that the people will be more ready to vote adequate sums for educational purposes when they are satisfied that the money is to be employed in a manner to produce the most extended and best results. Where a State is as poor as ours, and people as well, "fancy schooling" is an extravagance, and is provided at the expense of the thousands of children, who would be considered lucky if they could get thorough training in the fundamentals, the three

R's, in fact. I would see to it first that every child had at least some months' instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic before I would spend a dollar of the people's money for instruction of children in history, geography, languages, drawing, music and calisthenics. It is possibly the State's duty to educate all its children even in the arts, but it is a duty that should be placed at one side until that other duty of teaching all its children to read and write is fulfilled. If all the State's appropriation were devoted to support of primary schools, the counties would find some encouragement to tax themselves to provide higher forms of education; and the educational system as a whole would be productive of better results than we now observe.

From the Rev. John A. Rice, D.D., Montgomery, Alabama.

Absence from the city prevented an earlier reply to your papers.

It gives me real pleasure to endorse in toto the position of Dr. Phillips. Local taxation should be agitated throughout our State till public sentiment in every community rises to the height of supporting a school nine months every year. The rural districts should be carefully mapped out, consolidating the schools as far as possible, with a view to building up strong centres at regular intervals. There could be no better way of conducting a campaign of education along these lines than to arrange a series of "educational pic-nics" in rural districts, at which your strongest speakers would discuss at length the whole question of schools. There must be local pride and responsibility or there can never be successful schools. Even if the State or national government should supply all the money needed, it could not really *educate*. Even if every boy and girl in the land could be found to submit to being taught, it would pauperize our people and produce a helpless generation. Let the whole State be reached by intelligent agitation till it is as disgraceful to starve the minds of our children as it now is to withhold food from their bodies. Make every community feel its own responsibility for the growing souls in its midst, and provide ample means for the education of all alike. Of the whole people, for the whole people, by the whole people, should be the school motto of every district.

From J.D. Barron, Montgomery, Alabama.

I have read with no little interest the arguments of Dr. Phillips in favor of local taxation for schools, and am

free to say that in the main I agree with him. As you know, I am opposed to national aid for public schools in the South, but that is neither here nor there. The important point is, What can we now do to better the public schools of Alabama?

It was my fortune to obtain the little education I have in the country schools of the ante-bellum days, and I still retain a vivid recollection of the crowded, uncomfortable house,

the scarcity and inadequacy of books, and, in many cases, the incompetency of teachers, as well as the crudeness and inefficiency of the methods used. I am thankful that my children and grandchildren are spared some of my own educational experiences.

It should be plain to all that our State is not financially able to do all that is needed, nor can we rely on voluntary contributions. It is evident that more money is required, and I believe that the people should have the right to tax themselves. In the rural sections of the State, especially, better houses are needed, longer terms are demanded, and in some cases better salaries for teachers should be provided. If the State cannot supply these real needs then give the people the right to levy a tax on themselves to supply the deficiency. There should doubtless be some limitation, but the Constitution of Alabama now fixes that, and within that limit the people of any county should be given the right to tax themselves for the education of their children. I believe they would vote for such tax and would never regret it.

From Dr. B. J. Baldwin,
President of the Board
of Education, Mont-
gomery, Alabama.

Your circular letter on local support for local schools—accompanied by a letter from Prof. J. H. Phillips, of Birmingham, Alabama—has just been received. I heartily endorse what you have written on the subject.

The urgent necessity for a large increase in the public school fund of Alabama can not be denied. We are lamentably behind the times! It is not to be expected that the State of Alabama will increase the appropriation for school purposes, as the present expenditures for public education are about one-half of the State's total income.

How, then, are we to bring our State to compare even moderately with our neighbors? Evidently, relief can be had only through local taxation. We must permit communities to levy such special taxes for public schools as they deem necessary. I can not conceive of a reasonable objection to the plan of allowing the people to determine upon what they need and what they want. The frantic nightmare of some politicians over the spectre of reckless and extravagant taxation on the part of communities, given the power to tax themselves—is absurd.

I am most sincerely and anxiously in favor of amending that part of our State Constitution which forbids the voters of any township, city or county to levy a special school tax—above the totally inadequate ten cents on each one hundred dollars.

The housing of our rural public schools is a disgrace to the State, and special taxation is sorely needed—not only for the purpose of increasing the number and elevating the standard of these schools—but of erecting and equipping decent school-houses.

**From John H. Disque,
Judge of the City Court
of Gadsden, Alabama.**

Your esteemed letter dated March 14, 1904, requesting an expression of approval on the question of local taxation for educational purposes is received. My labors on the bench are so exacting that I find but little time in which to prepare such a paper as the importance of the subject demands and therefore will have to deny myself this great privilege. I am heartily and unequivocally in favor of local taxation because I believe it will bring the people in closer touch with the schools and excite greater interest in their management and success, which unfortunately is lacking at this time. Since I have been Chairman of the Board of Education of this City it has been my constant aim and purpose to have the people of this City tax themselves to maintain our system of education, and after years of agitation, last year, by an almost unanimous vote, our City voted to levy a tax of 1-4 of one per cent for the maintenance and support of the public schools for the City. What has been accomplished here can be accomplished elsewhere. What we need more than anything else is intelligent agitation, for I am of the opinion that when this matter is intelligently placed before the people there will be no trouble to get the people to rally to the support of education.

Permit me, my dear Mr. Murphy, although a stranger to you, to express my appreciation of the interest you are taking in this noble work which means so much in the moral, material and intellectual growth of our citizenship.

I write this letter for fear that my silence might be attributed to indifference.

**From G. W. Brock, Esq.,
Opelika, Alabama.**

The admirable paper of Dr. Phillips so thoroughly comprehends the subject of Local Taxation, and his arguments are so convincing, that it seems unnecessary to add anything to what he has said. I think, however, that the first need of our rural population, at present, is an educational awakening, a proper appreciation of the school facilities already at hand, a stronger and more persistent determination to educate, a fuller realization of the curse of illiteracy, and a genuine discontent with present conditions.

Many parents are not properly using, for the education of their children, the means already furnished by the State; for it is a lamentable fact that thousands of children in Alabama attend school only a month or two in each year while there is, within their reach, a fairly good school of several months' duration.

It is true that the most rapid way of creating a permanent interest in public education is to induce every citizen to contribute of his means for the establishment of a school in his community. That peculiar quality of human nature—that element of selfishness—that desire to get the most for what he gives, is

thus appealed to, and the interest of the whole community is focused into a common center; and that which sprang only from a motive of personal interest will grow and develop into the broadest spirit of patriotism.

I believe that such would be the effect of local taxation, without which, in my judgment, many years will pass before an adequate public school system will be maintained in Alabama.

Now, there are two main causes for opposition to local taxation which must be overcome, one is the "taxiphobia" so well discussed by Dr. Phillips—a kind of involuntary shuddering at the thought of increased taxation—such an aversion to the whole subject, that many persons oppose taxation for school purposes without investigating the benefits to be derived from it. The second cause is a constant dread and a combatting of every movement that might be construed as a benefit to the negro—a kind of fear that the property of white people will be taxed to advance negro education. From the very nature of the case, this result is avoided by local taxation: for the community wherein such taxation is undesirable, need not institute it; but, on account of a needless fear, other communities, desiring local taxation, should not be deprived of its benefits.

From the Hon. E. P. Wilson, St. Stephens, Alabama. I have just read with interest the remarks of Dr. Phillips on the subject of "Local Taxation for Schools."

The Doctor presents his subject in a concise and clear manner, and clearly shows the fallacy of depending exclusively on State taxation for maintenance of public schools. So vividly does the Doctor present this phase of his subject that the suggestion of the reservation-fed Indians presents itself to me as I think of the community that depends wholly upon State taxation for public schools. I think the true difficulty is located under the heads, "A stimulus to local pride," "The people must be interested," and, "Money is not all that is needed." A united interest must be had before local taxation can be thought of as a practical plan. Why does not this united interest exist? In my judgment, one class of our people, referred to by the Doctor under the head of "Money is not all that is needed," have for generations felt a contempt for public schools, and that it was degrading to any child to attend one. This has been the dominant or ruling class, who have shaped the policy of the State in all public affairs; while another class of our people have been at all times indifferent to education in any form, whether obtained from public or private schools.

The governing classes have been opposed to taxation for public schools as a useless tax, the poorer classes, and the ones most needing education, have been indifferent to educa-

tion as a useless thing. Between the two, we have what may be fairly termed a united opposition to public schools, instead of a united effort in favor of them.

While it is a fact that the people guard jealously the right of taxation, yet I think this is a minor matter in comparison to the difficulties above mentioned.

Northern capitalists who have largely invested in lands of this, Washington County, say to us, "Your tax is nothing in this State," showing that the people who pay the greater portion of the taxes are not burdened and do not complain at the rate.

**From Chas. A. Olivet,
County Superintendent
of Education, Winston
County.**

The State, seeing that she could not reach the needs of the schools by State appropriation and do justice to her taxpayers, made a constitutional provision, or limitation, with the county as a unit for taxation, which comes nearer reaching each school, than the State could, but it carries with it the same objections—it will give the large schools more than they really need and not be sufficient for the weak ones.

Another important objection to this one-mill-tax is, it, in the majority of cases, will be too small to help much. We think the people will have interest enough in their own pocket-books to know when to stop taxing themselves. Thus there should not be such a fine limitation, if any at all.

**From the Hon. Wm. H.
Samford, Troy, Ala-
bama.**

I have your favor requesting my views on a question that has long been considered by thinking men in this State and elsewhere, as being of the greatest importance to our civilization.

I consider the education of the "masses" of prime importance to any State believing in freedom and having a republican form of government. And where the government is of the people its greatness, its power and its glory depends on the education of its citizenship. Accomplish this and all things else come with little effort.

The government that is benefited most by education is the government closest to the citizen. Therefore, the first to be benefited by an intelligent citizen is the district or county in which he lives; then the State and then the nation. As each receives a benefit it would seem the part of wisdom for each to contribute to a system that would give an opportunity to every boy and girl in the State to receive an education sufficient to fit him or her for the duties of citizenship.

It is well enough for the State government to appropriate money for the maintenance of the public school system, and I see no good reason why the Federal government should

not be called on to assist in this great work, but in order to get the best results the people in whose midst these schools are established must become interested in them or the whole scheme will fail. They and their children are the ones who are receiving the direct benefit, and they should be called on to do their part in the work.

This can hardly be done by voluntary subscription, because in that event a few men in each community will refuse to go into the undertaking, and if they should agree, on account of the exemption laws, it would only be a moral obligation, the burden of which would fall on two or three men in the community. Therefore it would seem that local taxation for school purposes is the only hope for substantial results.

There is another idea here that ought not to be lost sight of. Our people ought to be impressed with the desire to do for themselves and not to rely too much on the aid of the government or the gifts of philanthropists. We all realize that our people have passed through an era of poverty and depression, and during that time they were excusable in a measure, for relying on the State to establish schools and to educate their children. But that time is passed and there are indeed very few counties in this State where the small additional tax of one mill could not be levied and collected without the least bit of oppression, and in my opinion it should be done.

The amount of illiteracy in Alabama, as shown by the census report, is alarming. And whatever may be said in extenuation of the conditions heretofore existing, there is no excuse for a continuation of these conditions. We have a State rich in material resources; our people are as capable and as industrious as those of any other section, and there is no reason why every community in Alabama should not provide itself with a school sufficient to give to every boy and girl the opportunity to get a common-school education. The State is doing its part, the philanthropist is doing his part, and it becomes the duty of the citizen to do his part in the advancement of the race.

I trust, sir, you will continue in your effort to build up the educational interests in our beloved State.

From R. E. Pettus, President of the Chamber of Commerce, Huntsville, Alabama.

I have been actively engaged for the past ten years in the industrial and educational development of our State, and as my work along various lines has brought me in contact with all classes of people, of every degree of worth and refinement, to the destitute and most ignorant in the mills and mountain districts, I have come to the conclusion that the foundation of all true progress is based upon the intellectual development of the people. Dr. Dabney, a few days ago, in a public address, most aptly emphasized this fact when he said, "Everything in the South waits on the education of the people. The natural resources

of the Southern States are great and varied; capital in abundance is ready for investment; only men are wanted who can plan, organize and direct."

From the Hon. Earle Pettus, Athens, Alabama. The most vital question before the people of Alabama to-day is that of education. It is more important than other issues because it furnishes the solution to so many of the problems that vex our people.

The State has reached forth a liberal hand and appropriated one-half its revenue to the common schools. There is no question but that in theory the people of any community should have the right to supplement what they receive from the State by local taxation. This would be democratic; it would be local self-government.

The people can be trusted. That which is correct in theory cannot fail in practice. Authority makes men conservative; and its exercise develops citizenship.

Every community may not be ready for local taxation for school purposes to-day, but each community should have the right to decide the question for itself on the merits.

From Judge W. R. Walker, Huntsville, Alabama. The paper of Dr. J. H. Phillips on "Local Taxation of Schools," may be accepted as proving one proposition, and that is, that in Alabama some additional freedom should be accorded to localities to tax themselves for the better support of their own schools. It may not be accepted as showing satisfactorily the extent to which existing restrictions should be relaxed.

Those restrictions are evidence of one of the lessons taught by the bitterest experience through which the people of Alabama have passed. One of the great objects of the Constitutional Convention of 1875, was to provide means to protect the property owning classes of the State against practical spoliation by burdensome taxation imposed by representatives chosen by an electorate composed very largely of non-taxpayers. The pledges on this subject which the dominant political party in the State felt itself impelled to make to the people as conditions on which they were asked to intrust to their representatives the task of framing a new Constitution in 1901, go to show that up to that time those restrictions retained a strong hold on the classes of voters who were expected to exert a controlling influence in determining the question of calling a Constitutional Convention. It is believed that the limitations on State, county and municipal taxation retained in the present Constitution of the State, represent a settled public policy. Enough money for general state and county purposes is obtained by taxation within the limits imposed. The disposition of municipal authorities to go to the limit, whatever it may be, both in taxation and the cre-

ation of debt, may well suggest the wisdom of retaining the existing limitations on municipal taxation. It does not seem that it is so much the cities and towns that need larger powers of taxation for school purposes.

But it must be admitted that the existing tax limitations constitute a serious obstacle to the working out of the problem of bettering the conditions of country life in Alabama. There is no reason in the nature of things why Alabama should not be dotted over with rural communities possessing all the social advantages which characterize such communities in other sections of our country. Our soil and climate possess unsurpassed attractions. But soil and climate, without good schools, will not attract to the country-districts the intelligent and progressive population they so much need. To get and keep in the country the class of people who will properly develop our preponderating agricultural interests, and at the same time furnish a constant stream of desirable recruits for the work of the cities and towns, the means of securing by community effort the advantages which surround country life in other sections must not be withheld. To turn the tide towards, instead of from the country, the opportunities of securing good schools in the country districts must be improved.

In some parts of the State, for instance the county in which the writer lives,—a good many representatives of the best class of the farming population of some of the middle and northwestern States have already bought lands and made homes in the country districts, and there are evidences that many others of the same class are looking in this direction with a view to settlement. The inevitable inquiry of nearly every prospector of this desirable class is, "what are the chances in Alabama for having good schools in the farming districts?" The unsatisfactory answer which, under existing conditions, must be given to this question, deprives the State of many a desirable immigrant. These people are accustomed to laws under which the residents within a very limited territory in a large measure determine for themselves the extent of the tax burden which they bear for the support of their own schools. The benefits resulting from the operation of that system in the States in which it prevails, may well suggest the wisdom of its adoption in some measure by this State. But in devising any scheme looking to this end, provision should be made against its possible inequitable operation under the conditions of land ownership now prevailing in many portions of Alabama. The object should be to provide a method of self-help by rural communities, composed in large part of resident landowners. Many country districts in Alabama are now peopled mostly by tenants living on the lands of non-resident

proprietors. In such districts it would not be fair to put it in the power of the majority made up of landless voters to tax the property of others for their own special benefit. To avoid such consequences, it is suggested that any scheme proposed for the taxation of themselves by rural communities, for the better support of their own schools, should embody some such provision as that such special tax shall not be imposed except when authorized by popular vote, and that the vote in its favor shall include those owning a majority in value of the taxable property which will bear the burden of the additional levy.

From Mr. H. O. Murfee, The able article of Dr. Phillips leaves
Marion, Alabama. little to be said in behalf of local taxation. Local taxation for schools is the doctrine of democracy in education. This doctrine teaches that the people who possess the most immediate knowledge of public affairs and who have the most intimate interest in their well-being, should be entrusted with the power of support and the responsibility of control. Denied this power and responsibility, the people cease to consider public affairs as their affairs, which demand their vigilant supervision and loyal support. The new Constitution of Alabama recognizes the importance of this principle by granting at least some power of local taxation to school districts. The government, by whatever name it is called, which prevents a people from improving their condition, savors more of despotism than of democracy.

The chief virtue of local taxation for schools is the virtue of democratic government; it develops the people through their efforts to govern themselves. Not the greatest happiness of the greatest number, but the most complete development of every citizen, is the blessing of self-government. This blessing is most beneficent in the conduct of education. The administration of their schools, through local support and local control, is itself a source of enlightenment to the people. The amount of revenue which will accrue from local taxation is a secondary consideration; the increase of interest and the community of effort on the part of the people in the elevation of their schools, is the vital effect of this mode of raising revenue. The amount of revenue raised is a matter of the moment; the active interest of the people in the education of their own children, is a matter of all time. Such interest is a source of life unto life, and is itself a mighty means of enduring revenue. Local taxation for schools yields its richest fruits, not in an increased revenue, but in the personal interest each citizen requires for the betterment of the schools: In the belief which thus comes to prevail that the schools are of the people, for the people, and by the people, and that the people are the repositories of their children's welfare. The people are the keepers of their children.

From Dr. John Massey, Tuskegee, Alabama. I have carefully read your letter and the argument made by Dr. Phillips.

The subject under consideration has, for some time, given me grave concern. We cannot, as Alabamians, be indifferent to the educational conditions of our State. The fact that we are so low in the roll of States in regard to illiteracy and at the same time are contributing less per average pupil to public education than any other State, should quicken the energies of every teacher and awaken a consciousness of dereliction in the mind of every thoughtful citizen. These facts appeal to our religion, our philanthropy, our patriotism, our State pride, our material interests—in fact, to every motive that characterizes good citizenship. I fully endorse the plan you suggest.

Without repeating what you have already so well said, I would emphasize two thoughts:

1.—We cannot keep our State abreast with the progress of the age without the higher education of our own people. While it is true that education works from above downward, it is also true that the material must go from below upward. Our colleges are suffering more from lack of well prepared students than from all other causes. The remedy for this will be found in better common schools.

There is a tendency among us to turn the whole business of education over to the State, since it has undertaken to provide for this, without thinking how inadequate even more than half of the public revenues is to meet the demands of the case, and without considering that personal interest in the work is an essential condition of success. Formerly every intelligent community had a good school which the citizens built by private subscription and maintained by tuition fees. The best thing in it was the community interest which it called forth and cemented. Its weak point was that it did not reach all the people. We must now look to the public schools for general preparatory education. We must seek to bring to the public school the old-time community interest. Local taxation will more effectually do this than reliance upon appropriations from the State treasury or any other source remote from the communities concerned.

2.—We cannot have a sound and healthy civilization without the vitalizing energy of strong moral elements. These moral forces cannot have full play while we have so much popular ignorance. Intelligence is one essential condition of moral growth. If we would build up a safe and permanent civilization, we must see to it, that not only the well-to-do have good educational facilities, but that every child of the State shall have the door of Knowledge opened to him with all reasonable encouragement to enter in and become an intelligent moral citizen.

Local taxation is the next step in the solution of our educational problem.

From the Hon. John B. Knox, Anniston, Alabama; President of the Recent Constitutional Convention.

I have read with much interest your article and that of Dr. Phillips touching the improvement of the school system in this State, and I heartily favor local taxation, under reason-

able safeguards, whereby the people in the several counties may raise additional funds with which to enlarge and extend their public schools.

In the course of some remarks delivered in the constitutional convention of New York, the late George William Curtis said :

“There is one point that we can not properly forget; it is, that all that we have and all that we are in this country depends upon general education and general intelligence. When this country is ignorant, then this country ceases to be—I mean in its true and best sense; and it seems to be the duty of every man who thoroughly understands the true principles of popular government at least to put himself fairly upon the historical record as in favor of everything which shall educate the people.”

I recall, too, the sentiment of Mr. Canning, the great English statesman, referring to the public school system of our mother-country, he said:

“It is in her public schools and universities that the youth of England are, by a discipline which shallow judgments have sometimes attempted to undervalue, prepared for the duties of public life. There are rare and splendid exceptions, to be sure, but in my conscience I believe that England would not be what she is without her system of public education, and that no other country can become what England is without the advantage of such a system.”

From the Hon. Alex. T. London, Birmingham, Alabama.

A sense of public duty makes it a pleasure to reply to your letter containing a copy of Dr. Phillips's plea for Local Taxation for the Support of the Public Schools, for I feel that you are entitled to encouragement and aid from all upon whom you may call, and, if my aid be small, you can rest assured of my hearty good wishes and good will. Such service as I can give, I will give gladly.

You say very truly “The true service of Alabama lies not in the constant flattery of our people, but in a sympathetic, yet fearless revelation of the conditions which encompass them,” and you and Dr. Phillips have each done a service to the State by your papers.

If the ends you both seek were now accomplished facts, existing abuses could not exist. Publicity, for which the guarantee of the freedom of the press was devised and so rigidly insisted upon in our fundamental law, would be the rule and not the exception in Alabama, and the exposure of our unhappy condition would not be received, as it may be, with heat and unreasoning rancor as a reproach upon the

State, but an intelligent people would realize that the fact not the exposure, was the cause of reproach, if reproach there be.

"Give me liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties," said John Milton, and this has been the corner stone of our liberties. Let the light of intelligence be spread among the people and we may safely trust them to cure abuses.

It seems to me the real question presented in Dr. Phillips's paper is, Are we willing to trust the people to correct the confessed evils which exist?

You have made it pitifully plain how deplorable our condition is, and a simple and practical remedy within our reach is suggested, which has the great advantage of being tried and tested. The natural protest against experimental legislation finds no basis upon which to rest.

My confidence and trust in the honesty and capacity of the people to administer government steadily increases as the years go by, and even the large percentage of illiteracy in Alabama, which the census figures disclose, does not weaken my confidence. I am convinced that much of the illiteracy and ignorance, and their accompaniments of prejudice and passion, are directly traceable to the want of confidence in the masses we have for years displayed.

The proposition to have local taxation for local schools appeals to my judgment as worthy of the best efforts of our people to secure, in whatever aspect it may be viewed. It would procure the necessary school funds; it would secure the much needed school-houses and schools in the rural districts; it would put the burdens and responsibilities of creating, maintaining and managing these schools upon the people whose children are to receive the direct benefits of them, and, while affording the means of education to the children, it would of itself be an education in practical citizenship to the adults. Each school-house would be a center from which not only book-learning would come, but from which that higher and more exacting intelligence of how government should be conducted would radiate not only to the limits of the particular district, but all over the State.

I am perfectly willing for the people to tax themselves without limit for their own direct benefit, and when they once realize that they alone receive the benefits and bear the burdens of their own creation, and that the school is their own, and its success or failure is dependent solely upon their wisdom and judgment, the fear I have is, not that they will levy too much taxes, but that over-prudence will restrain them from levying enough. And this I think has been the result of experience wherever the system prevails.

Experience has demonstrated that constitutional restraints upon representative bodies is essential—the burdens of their creation do not fall on the creators.

The virtues of the proposition seem manifest, but what especially appeal to me are (1) the dual education which the system affords to both adult and child, (2) the elevation and enlightenment of our citizenship by the trust we repose in the people, (3) the light of hope which it holds out to the most benighted sections, and (4) the self-contained restraint against abuse.

The discussion of the issue by Dr. Phillips and yourself and the agitation of it by you will educate the people in right lines, and must in the end arouse a public sentiment which will assert itself for the public good.

God speed you and all the other good men and women who are so patiently and zealously laboring at the great task you have set before yourselves.

JOSEPH B. GRAHAM AT RICHMOND.



AT the Sixth Session of the Conference for Education in the South at Richmond, Virginia, April 23, 1903, the late Joseph B. Graham of Talladega, Alabama, spoke as follows. His words—words of one of Alabama's noblest educational leaders—are here reprinted because of their incidental reference to the subject of this symposium. Said Mr. Graham:

“For the first time in the history of our commonwealth, the principle and privilege of local taxation for public school purposes are recognized in the organic law. It is true that the unit is the county and one mill the limit, while the ideal unit is the district and the will of the people the limit, still all must agree that ours is better than no unit and no rate at all. (Applause.) If I mistake not the sentiment of the people in the counties which I have visited, they will vote to levy the one mill tax at the first opportunity.

“My future work will be largely in assisting the educational forces in several counties in campaigns for the levying of the one mill tax.

“The doctrine of local taxation is becoming popular and is going to win in Alabama, although our public school system has been in existence only about fifty years and has had but small financial support until the past fifteen years. Our rural white schools averaged one hundred and five days and our rural colored schools averaged ninety-three days, free terms, during the last scholastic year.

"Be it said to the credit of Alabama, that, although her people are comparatively poor, though she has in common with other Southern States suffered the disasters of war and borne the burdens and sacrifices of reconstruction, and though forty-four per cent of her population belongs to a race which pays but little more than five per cent of the taxes, still our new organic law forbids that discrimination inspired by prejudice which would restrict the educational privileges and rights of a particular class or race according to its contribution in taxes for the support of the Government. This equality of benefits did not arise from any cringing fear of Federal amendments, but from a spontaneous philanthropy too generous to take advantage of the poor, and a sense of right and humanity too proud to stoop to wrong an inferior race. (Applause.)

"In my opinion, the highest and sincerest expression of the principle of fraternity and the most splendid prophecy of the permanence and high standard of our future civilization are to be found at one and the same time in the willingness of the people, through honest government, to make liberal contribution for free public schools for the education of all the people. (Applause.)

"This ideal condition has not always obtained in Alabama, but I stand here to pledge the enlightened sentiment and property-holding citizenship of my beloved State, as far as in their ability lies, to this platform, and only this, for our future public education." (Applause.)



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 030 218 795 2 •